

decisions have dug our economy into a deep hole, and American families desperately need them to stop digging.

Families of this country are currently battling the worst inflation in well over a decade. Over the last 12 months, consumer prices have shot up by 5.4 percent. Gasoline prices and food prices each increased by a full 1.2 percent just last month alone. That is just in 1 month. Year on year, groceries are about 4.5 percent more expensive than they were at this time in 2020. Let's look at housing. Rent jumped a full half a percentage point just in September alone. That was the biggest monthly jump in two decades.

On paper, American workers have been getting raises. The average worker's paychecks have gotten bigger over the last year, but the Democrats' inflation has cannibalized all those gains and then some. Any man or woman in the country who hasn't gotten a pay raise of 5.5 percent this year has effectively had their pay cut by the Democrats' inflation.

Let me say it again: Unless you have recently gotten a 5.5-percent raise, you have gotten a pay cut. And even the households that have enjoyed pay raises are contending with major shortages of the things they want to buy and rapid and unpredictable price changes.

Of course, none of the families we represent need to hear these figures from experts on the news; they are living this reality every time they need to swing by the store, fill up their tank, or grab some essentials.

What is especially remarkable and especially sad is that our Nation's inflation nightmare was not unavoidable. These conditions are the product of intentional policy decisions made by Democrats over the objection of experts who warned exactly—exactly—what would happen.

Larry Summers, a leading economist and top adviser to each of the last two Democratic Presidents, said a few days ago—just a few days ago—“We're in more danger than we've been during my career of losing control of inflation in the U.S.” That is Larry Summers, just a couple of days ago. The worst inflation risk he has ever seen? Mr. Summers was one of the many mainstream economists who warned the Biden administration what their policies would unleash. From the start, they tried to persuade Democrats not to ram through their historic glut of borrowing, printing, and spending. Ah, but alas, Democrats didn't listen. Back in the springtime, they used the pandemic as an excuse to pass a massive spending bill that the White House boasted was the most leftwing legislation in American history. Now families are paying the painful price.

The country is deep in this hole that Democrats dug, but they are showing no indication—none—that they want to stop digging. Led by our socialist colleague, the distinguished Senator from Vermont, Chairman SANDERS, Washington Democrats are plowing forward

with yet another reckless taxing-and-spending spree that would make their huge inflationary package from the springtime look like child's play by comparison. They want the government to borrow and print multiple trillions more dollars and dump all that spending onto the heads of families who are already struggling—struggling—to stay afloat.

Meanwhile, Democrats want to saddle a sputtering economy with the biggest peacetime tax hikes on record, obliterating President Biden's promise not to raise taxes for the vast majority of American families and leaving American job creators with tougher tax rates than businesses pay in communist China.

Look at energy prices. Americans are already paying more at the pump than they have in 7 years, but now our colleagues want to go beyond their war on gasoline and slap new taxes and new regulations on other domestic energy sources such as natural gas. But winter is fast approaching. The whole world is steeling for huge price increases in natural gas. Our friends in Europe are frantically trying to secure their gas supply lines, and Russia is threatening to turn the continent's winter heating into a political hostage. But, inexplicably, Democrats' response is essentially to have America stand down as an energy superpower—new taxes and new regulations on top of the inflation that is already wreaking havoc.

Here was one headline last week:

Winter heating bills set to jump as inflation hits home.

The story went on:

With prices surging worldwide for heating oil, natural gas and other fuels, the U.S. government said Wednesday it expects households to see their heating bills jump as much as 54% compared to last winter.

This is the moment that President Biden is choosing to let the farthest-left people in Washington, DC, rewrite America's energy and environmental policy. Reckless liberal policies have dug America into a hole. Americans need Democrats to stop digging deeper, but the response from my colleagues across the aisle is to trade in their shovels for an excavator. Democrats want to keep digging deeper. They want to try to inflate their way out of inflation.

It makes no sense whatsoever. It sounds as crazy as it is. No wonder this expensive socialist experiment is proving so very painful. It is not what American voters elected, and it is not what American families want.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

REMEMBERING COLIN POWELL

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, like so many others in the Senate across America, I was saddened to learn this morning of the passing of Colin Powell.

In his lifetime, he broke down so many barriers, and he held some of the most important titles in this great Nation: General of the U.S. Army, National Security Adviser, America's first Black Joint Chiefs of Staff, and our first Black Secretary of State.

But before he held any of those positions, and after he stepped away from them, Colin Powell was always a patriot and a public servant. He was the son of immigrants—Jamaican immigrants—who raised their children to make the most of every opportunity that America offered and to show their gratitude to this Nation by giving—giving back however they could.

That story of opportunity and obligation is a story told by every immigrant parent to their children. It is the same story my mother taught to me and my brothers.

Much has been said and written about Colin Powell's historic and distinguished career as a soldier and a statesman. He was respected in a way that transcended partisan labels.

He wasn't perfect. His speech in 2003 to the U.N. General Assembly claimed incorrectly that Iraq likely possessed weapons of mass destruction. It was based on information he was given and later learned to be false. It helped make a case for a war about which he had misgivings, and he would come to regret those remarks the rest of his life.

But he never stopped trying to serve, even after leaving public office. In 2010, Colin Powell spoke out publicly about a cause that is deeply personal to many people, including myself. He and other military leaders urged this Senate to pass the Dream Act—legislation that would give young immigrants who grew up in the United States a chance to earn their citizenship.

Who better could speak to that issue than Colin Powell, the son of immigrants who served this Nation with distinction and combat and in public service? Regrettably, at the time, while a majority of Senators supported the Dream Act, it was filibustered and did not pass. Still, tens of thousands of immigrants are risking their lives today defending our Nation in uniform. Among them may very well be another Colin Powell.

It would be a fitting tribute to Secretary Powell for us to pass immigration reform now—this year—and recognize what a great patriot and son of immigrants like Colin Powell brought to this Nation.

One last point. Colin Powell survived one form of cancer nearly 20 years ago. He was being treated for another when he passed away. Multiple myeloma, a form of blood cancer, weakens the immune system. So despite the fact that he was fully vaccinated, General Powell died of complications of COVID.

It is sad and ironic that a man who spent so much of his life defending others from danger, in the end, died from a common enemy that too many of our fellow citizens continue to deny, thus giving the virus an opportunity to replicate and wreak havoc. We are not each other's enemies; the virus is the enemy.

Today, it claimed the life of an American statesman. By this time tomorrow, it will have taken another 1,500 family members, neighbors, heroes to many.

Especially for young children who can't be vaccinated yet and for the millions of Americans with compromised immune systems, we really have to increase our vaccine rates.

CONGRATULATING THE CHICAGO SKY

Madam President, last night, the world discovered that in Chicago, the sky is the limit. Our city of Chicago is home to a new team of champions.

During the Women's National Basketball Association finals at Wintrust Arena, the Chicago Sky mounted a comeback for the ages. In the fourth quarter, the team overcame an 11-point deficit to claim their first-ever championship title. The victory was the culmination of a historic season. Their record in the regular season was a mediocre 16 and 16, but in the runup for the playoffs, the Chicago Sky won 8 postseason games, an alltime record for the WNBA. And from start to finish, last night's victory was truly a team effort.

Hometown hero Candace Parker scored 16 points—she is nothing short of amazing—including a three-pointer that tied the game with less than 2 minutes left, sending the arena into an uproar. Kahleah Copper was named the WNBA finals MVP. Allie Quigley, a Joliet native, scored 26 points, and her wife and fellow teammate, Courtney Vandersloot, finished the game with 15 assists.

All-around, last night's victory was a legendary feat for the Chicago Sky. Tomorrow, our city will celebrate our new hometown champs in Millennium Park.

I want to thank every member of the Chicago Sky for making Skytown proud, especially Michael Alter and John Rogers, two personal friends who brought the franchise to Chicago and have worked diligently to make it the best every step of the way. Last night, they did. It is an inspiration to our city and to all the young players everywhere who want to look to a team that proves you should never quit.

NOMINATION OF GUSTAVO A. GELPI

Finally, Madam President, today the Senate will vote to confirm Gustavo Gelpi to serve on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the First Circuit.

Judge Gelpi is a highly qualified jurist who has two decades of experience on the bench. When confirmed, he will be only the second judge of Hispanic origin and the second judge from Puerto Rico to serve on the First Circuit.

I would like to take just a moment to discuss his extensive qualifications and

experience. Throughout his career, Judge Gelpi has dedicated himself to public service. Prior to his appointment to the bench, he gained a keen understanding of the need for fairness and impartiality in our system of justice. He worked as a public defender as well as prosecutor. He served in the Puerto Rican Department of Justice, where he handled criminal matters on behalf of the attorney general of Puerto Rico.

In 2001, Judge Gelpi was selected to serve as magistrate judge for the District of Puerto Rico. Five years later, his impressive judicial record caught the attention of President George W. Bush, who nominated him to serve as district judge for the District of Puerto Rico. With Senate Republicans in the majority, Judge Gelpi's nomination received unanimous support in both the Senate Judiciary Committee and on the floor of the Senate.

Having served as a Federal judge for 20 years, Judge Gelpi is eminently qualified to sit on the First Circuit. He has already presided over 3,400 cases, 62 jury trials, and issued almost 900 written opinions.

He is a real judge. He is well versed in both complex and civil criminal matters and was rated unanimously "well qualified" by the American Bar Association.

Judge Gelpi's nomination is yet another example of the Biden administration and Senate Democrats working to advance judicial nominees to bring professional and demographic diversity to the Federal bench. The fact that Judge Gelpi has been nominated by both Republican and Democratic Presidents is almost historic and is certainly a testament to his evenhandedness and fidelity to the rule of law. Leaders on both sides of the aisle trust that he will rule impartially and without regard for partisanship.

Once he is confirmed as only the second judge of Hispanic origin to serve on the First Circuit, Judge Gelpi will help build a Federal bench that truly reflects the diversity of America. I urge my colleagues to join me in supporting Judge Gelpi's nomination.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. GRASSLEY. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. DUCKWORTH). Without objection, it is so ordered.

DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

Mr. GRASSLEY. Madam President, earlier this month, Attorney General Garland released a memo instructing Department of Justice employees to respond to increasingly passionate school board meetings across the country. That memo talks about working to stop the violence and the threats of violence. That part of it is very fine, but

unfortunately the memo makes it sound like the Department of Justice might want to go after much more than just violence.

Over the last year, school board meetings have turned from relatively calm, local affairs to often boisterous meetings that are seen across the country. This began with parents who were upset after schools were being closed last year well after we learned that they could safely reopen in spite of COVID-19. Then these meetings grew to include pushback against mask mandates for students and against school districts adopting a curriculum known as critical race theory.

There are many parents across the country who are upset about these things, and that is their right, to be upset about them and to talk about them all they want to—after all, freedom of speech, freedom of assembly.

So here is the issue. The Attorney General's memo spoke of violence and threats of violence. Make no mistake about it—violence should never be used to get what you want in politics. It is illegal for a good reason, and making real, true threats is illegal as well. They scare people, and that is not right. No one should ever threaten someone with violence just because they are angry about some school policy.

Unfortunately, however, the Department of Justice memo goes further than that. A person reading it might think that a parent can't speak—really speak his or her mind at a school board meeting; that spirited debate is not welcome; that very pointed and direct questions from educators to school board members aren't welcome; that deep disagreements are not welcome. Parents coming and speaking to their local school boards is what our democracy is all about—the essence of our representative system of government. Whether it is Congress, State legislatures, city hall, or school boards, we ought to be able to have civil discussion, and nobody ought to question that civil discussion.

Of course, democracy also includes very passionate disagreements. If an elected official can't handle a passionate disagreement, then he or she shouldn't go into politics in the first place. That goes for the President; that goes for this Senator; and that goes for every member on every school board in the country.

Elected officials don't go crying to the FBI when constituents tell them something—how they are really feeling on an issue—regardless of how strong that feeling might be.

If a parent is passionately advocating for her child at a school board meeting and school officials tell her she is out of line, the parent should not have to worry that the FBI is going to pay her a visit in her home after that meeting.

She should not have to wonder whether the PATRIOT Act is going to be used to investigate her. It should never even cross that person's mind. If